



# Contractors & Tradesmen Working Indoors

## What to Do if You Find Vermiculite and Asbestos In a Home or Business

Spring 2007

### Vermiculite In Homes and Businesses



Vermiculite was used in a variety of forms for decades in and around homes and businesses as a soil additive, lightweight aggregate for concrete, and attic insulation, among other things.

If vermiculite is present, it might contain a very toxic form of asbestos from a vermiculite mine in Libby, Montana. Exposure to Libby Asbestos could lead to such serious diseases as mesothelioma, asbestosis, and other pleural maladies. Asbestos-containing vermiculite might be found in walls, home foundations, and other relatively inaccessible areas. Remodeling, repair, electrical, or plumbing work might uncover vermiculite that was otherwise sealed in place. Always ask the homeowner if they know where you might find vermiculite.

It is possible that you might unexpectedly find vermiculite after starting your work, perhaps by cutting into a wall. EPA strongly cautions you not to work with vermiculite or disturb it any way that might cause Libby Asbestos to become airborne.

**Improper work practices can contaminate the interior of the home or building where you are working and pose a health threat to residents and workers! It is your responsibility to know the state and local laws and regulations.**

**Libby Asbestos might be considerably more toxic than other commercial asbestos products. It should be avoided or handled with extreme care. The health risk from exposure to all asbestos**

### Precautionary Steps to Take So You Can Get On With Your Job

If you encounter vermiculite, you may be exposed to Libby Asbestos. If you choose to continue working, take the following steps:

1. Have a licensed inspector test the material to determine if asbestos is present before doing work.
2. **Always notify the resident.** If they haven't already told you about it, they might not know vermiculite is present in their home.
3. **For a small quantity**, such as a handful of vermiculite, use a damp paper towel to scoop up the material into a sealable plastic bag or jar. Then use another damp towel to wipe down the area. Place the used paper towels in the container and throw everything away in a proper receptacle.
4. **Never vacuum vermiculite with a regular vacuum.** HEPA filter vacuums are effective on small quantities of vermiculite
5. **For larger quantities** of vermiculite, such as what you might find in a breached wall, **do not disturb the material. Do not vacuum large amounts of vermiculite - even with a HEPA vacuum. Call an asbestos removal expert immediately.**

depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. If you take the basic precautions outlined in this fact sheet, work on your project will be much safer.

Common dust or surgical masks are not effective against asbestos fibers! Wearing a respirator with a HEPA filter is the best way to avoid breathing asbestos fibers. However, they must be used properly or exposure may still occur. For information on respirator requirements, visit OSHA's website:  
[www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection)



## Whom Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos?

### Federal Internet Web Pages:

EPA: [www.epa.gov/asbestos/](http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/)

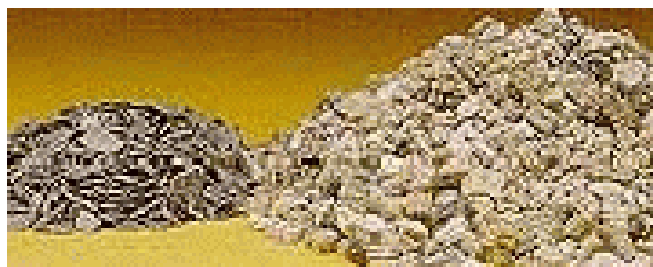
Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease  
Registry: <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>

Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
(OSHA: ) <http://www.osha.gov>

National Institute for Occupational Safety and  
Health (NIOSH):  
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>

### Phone Numbers:

EPA's Asbestos Ombudsman: 1-800-368-5888  
EPA's Asbestos Hotline: 1-800-471-7127



**Raw and Popped Ore**

### STATE ASBESTOS PROGRAMS

Most states have laws requiring that employers hire a licensed inspector to determine if asbestos is present before doing any work. Most states allow only licensed asbestos removal experts to remove it. Asbestos that is not associated with the Libby vermiculite mine is still regulated by the states. If any asbestos is found, no matter what type, it should be dealt with according to state regulations. Contact the state asbestos program for more information.

- **Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Asbestos Program Information:** 303-692-3100  
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ap/asbestos/>
- **Montana Department of Environmental Quality/Asbestos Control Program:** (406) 444-5300  
<http://www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos>
- **North Dakota Department of Health, Asbestos Control:** 701-328-5188  
<http://www.health.state.nd.us/AQ/IAQ/ASB/>
- **South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources/Asbestos Program:** (605) 773-3153  
<http://www.state.sd.us/denr/des/WasteMgn/Asbestos/ASBpage1.htm>
- **Utah Department of Environmental Quality/Asbestos Program:** 801-536-4424  
<http://www.airquality.utah.gov/HAPs/ASBESTOS/index.htm>
- **Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality,** 307-777-7584  
<http://deq.state.wy.us/out/outreachfaq.htm#Asbestos>